

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L WELLINGTON 000824

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/ANP, NEA/I

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/26/2014

TAGS: [PREL](#), [PGOV](#), [MOPS](#), [NZ](#)

SUBJECT: NEW ZEALAND TROOPS RETURN FROM IRAQ; NO FUTURE DEPLOYMENTS SCHEDULED

Classified By: POL/ECON COUNSELOR KATHERINE B. HADDA,
REASON 1.5 (B, D)

1. (C) Summary: New Zealand's 12-month military deployment to Iraq ended September 25, with the homecoming of over 60 engineers and support staff. Prime Minister Helen Clark welcomed the troops, and issued a public statement confirming that no further deployments to Iraq are being considered. While ruling out military assistance, Clark did, however, indicate a willingness to provide additional aid funds, and to look favorably on a request from the UN for one or two military officers to serve in UN headquarters in Baghdad. Post continues to encourage the GoNZ to remain engaged in Iraq, but political and resource constraints virtually ensure Clark will not go beyond what she has already indicated. End Summary.

NZ Troops Return Home

2. (U) New Zealand's 61-person Light Engineer Group was welcomed home September 25 by New Zealand Prime Minister Helen Clark and Defense Minister Mark Burton, ending NZ's military presence in Iraq. The engineers, second 6-month deployment in Basra, Iraq had been hampered in recent weeks by deteriorating security conditions, but Clark stressed that the engineers had not simply waited out their time, but had remained in the hopes of completing more of their planned work.

No Troops, But Financial Aid Possible

3. (C) In media interviews Clark has made clear that the GoNZ is not considering sending either military or civilian aid personnel to Iraq, noting that the situation is "too difficult and too dangerous." While ruling out military assistance, Clark has, however, stated publicly a willingness to provide additional aid funds, and to look favorably on a request from the UN for one or two military officers to serve in UN headquarters in Baghdad. (Comment: A senior MOD source told DCM that the New Zealand UN Mission had been instructed to work with the UN to ensure that an "appropriate" invitation would be issued once the UN was ready to return to Iraq. End Comment.) In an interview with NZ media September 26, Iraqi Prime Minister Iyad Allawi emphasized that a secure Iraq would serve as a defense for New Zealand. He listed a number of areas where the GoNZ could assist, including the provision of troops to protect UN agencies, technical assistance or participation in the multinational force.

4. (C) Comment: Clark's insistence that further GoNZ assistance would be either solely financial, or at the behest of the UN is in keeping in tone with earlier comments. She has always studiously refrained from linking NZ's presence in Iraq to the US and the Coalition, and consistently argued that her government's decision to deploy to Iraq was taken in order to support NZ's commitments to the UN and the multilateral system. Despite this, Post continues to emphasize that, under UN auspices or not, the GoNZ needs to remain engaged in Iraq in some capacity. While Clark was adamant that the troops were returning based on a pre-determined schedule (and indeed, they are in need of a rest after a their grueling six-month deployment), domestic pressures have likely played a role. Much of the North Island was damaged by severe storms and flooding in the first half of 2004. Infrastructure repairs have been hampered by a shortage of civil engineers, and the returning troops will fill this critical gap.
Burnett